

**Please amend the Claims as follows:**

1. (currently amended) A grading apparatus for grading ~~objects such as fish or shrimp in~~ items of seafood with respect of ~~to~~ their size, said apparatus comprising a plurality of juxtaposed endless conveyor belts (27), each belt including an unloading end and a loading end, adjacent belts forming a width therebetween,

wherein the width (9) separating adjacent conveyor belts is larger at the unloading end (29) than at the loading end (28) of the belts, each conveyor belt (27) having a cross-section with sloping sides such that in between each adjacent pair of belts is formed a sorting channel with substantially continuous sloping sides, each side being at an angle with respect to the axis of the belt (8) in the range of about 70-85°, wherein each belt comprises a plurality of hinged segments forming said substantially continuous sloping sides, each of said hinged segments (1) ~~has~~ having an open cleft (3) ~~on the ridge between the sloping sides of each segment.~~

2. (original) The grading apparatus of claim 1, wherein each belt is a continuous elastic belt.

3. (currently amended) The grading apparatus of claim 1, wherein each of the continuously sloping sides (2) has an angle (8) in the range of about 70-80°.

4. (currently amended) The grading apparatus of claim 3, wherein each of the continuously sloping sides (2) has an angle (8) in the range of about 75-80°.

5. (currently amended) The grading apparatus of claim 3, wherein each of the continuously sloping sides (2) has an angle (8) of about 80°.

6. (currently amended) The grading apparatus of claim 1, wherein each cleft ~~(3)~~ has a width in the range of about 3-10 mm.

7. (currently amended) The grading apparatus of claim 1, further comprising guiding means ~~(21-24)~~ arranged by the loading end ~~(28)~~ of the conveyor belts ~~(27)~~ for guiding ~~objects~~ items of seafood to be graded to the channels in between adjacent belts and away from ridges and/or clefts on top of said hinged segments.

8. (original) The use of an apparatus of any of claims 1-7 for the size grading of items.

9. (currently amended) The use of claim 8, wherein the ~~items~~ items of seafood are selected from the group consisting of peeled or unpeeled shrimp tails, lobster tails, fish including capelin, sardine, herring, mackerel, horse mackerel, menhaden, anchovy, blue whiting, ocean perch, cod, pollock, haddock, oysters, clams and mussels.